

**Remarks Following a Visit to the  
Washington DC Veterans Affairs  
Medical Center**

*August 13, 2007*

Thanks for coming. It's an honor for me to be here with Senator Bob Dole and Secretary Donna Shalala, Secretary Jim Nicholson and Deputy Secretary Gordon England. I appreciate the opportunity to come to a building full of compassion, a place of expertise, where people are dedicating their time and efforts to help those on active duty and those who have served before.

Any time there is any doubt in anybody's mind that our veterans are not getting excellent care, then we in Government have a duty to deal with those doubts. I have asked Secretary Gates and Secretary Nicholson to review their respective Departments and the interface of their Departments—the Defense Department and the Veterans Department—to make sure that any doubt as to whether or not a veteran or one on active duty gets the best care is—does so.

I also asked Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala to lead a nonpartisan, independent Commission to identify areas where we can do better and, more importantly, come up with solutions as to how to deal with those problems. The Commissioners conducted a very serious and lengthy review of our military and veterans health care systems, and they submitted recommendations to me at the end of July. After Senator Dole and Secretary Shalala briefed me on their recommendations, I then directed Secretaries Gates and Nicholson to study and, more importantly, implement the recommendations, so we can ensure our severely wounded servicemembers and their families that they will receive the best possible care.

We've got great health care for our wounded. We just want to make sure that the system is seamless and that the families are treated with the utmost of care during these difficult moments. Secretaries Gates and Nicholson and their Departments are working hard to make sure their Agencies talk to each other and collaborate. Equally importantly, they're looking at the recommendations that the Dole-Shalala Commission put forward, and they're implementing them. In

other words, the Commission did really good work. The Commission's recommendations are solid, and therefore, to the extent that we can move without congressional law, we will do so. And not only will we do so; we will keep the commissioners abreast of the progress we are making.

Secondly, we want to work with Congress. When they come back in September, we want to work with Congress to pass that which is necessary to make sure that the Dole-Shalala Commission's recommendations are fully implemented. In other words, there are some aspects of the Commission recommendations that require congressional approval. We believe it's important for Congress to listen to the Commission. We believe the recommendations make a lot of sense, and we would ask for the Congress to pass those recommendations as quickly as possible, so I can sign them into law.

There's an amazing—there's a lot of amazing things taking place here in this facility. For example, we saw information technology, health care records that are being passed seamlessly from the Department of Defense to the VA to make sure that the care providers here have got up-to-date access for each patient. We saw volunteers helping the wounded learn to regain balance and confidence through kayaking programs. I saw physical therapists—I heard physical therapists talk about their patients with the kind of care and compassion that obviously requires a big heart and strong commitment.

The commitment of this Government is this: Anybody who is sent into harm's way deserves the best possible care. We're dedicated to this goal. If we find problems, we'll solve the problems. For those who are providing the care, we thank you. For the soldiers who are receiving the care, we owe you the best. And for the families who stand by them, we thank you for your patience.

God bless our troops. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Bob Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna E. Shalala, Co-chairs, President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

**Remarks on the Resignation of  
Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior  
Adviser Karl Rove**

*August 13, 2007*

Karl Rove is moving on down the road. I've been talking to Karl for a while about his desire to spend more time with Darby and Andrew. This is a family that has made enormous sacrifices, not only for our beloved State of Texas but for a country we both love.

Now, we've been friends for a long time, and we're still going to be friends. I would call Karl Rove a dear friend. We've known each other as youngsters interested in serving our State. We worked together so we could be in a position to serve this country. And so I thank my friend. I'll be on the road behind you here in a little bit. I thank Darby and I thank Karl for making a tremendous sacrifice, and I wish you all the very best.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:31 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Karl Rove's wife, Darby Rove, and son, Andrew Rove. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Deputy Chief of Staff Rove.

**Statement on the Death of  
Mervyn E. Griffin, Jr.**

*August 13, 2007*

For over half a century, Merv Griffin entertained America. He was a man of innovation and energy who greeted challenges with laughter and determination. By following his passions and trusting his instincts, Merv became one of our Nation's best-known and most respected entertainers. He introduced Americans to a generation of talent on his talk show, created two of the most successful game shows in history, and led a thriving hospitality business. Merv was also a generous leader who gave back to his community, donating millions of dollars to provide abused children with safe haven and brighter futures.

Laura and I are saddened by his death. His family is in our thoughts and prayers.

**Executive Order 13442—Amending  
the Order of Succession in the  
Department of Homeland Security**

*August 13, 2007*

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, 5 U.S.C. 3345, *et seq.*, it is hereby ordered as follows:

**Section 1.** Section 88 of Executive Order 13286 of February 28, 2003 ("Amendment of Executive Orders, and Other Actions, in Connection With the Transfer of Certain Functions to the Secretary of Homeland Security"), is amended by striking the text of such section in its entirety and inserting the following in lieu thereof:

"Sec. 88. Order of Succession.

Subject to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, the officers named in subsection (a) of this section, in the order listed, shall act as, and perform the functions and duties of the office of, the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary), if they are eligible to act as Secretary under the provisions of the Federal Vacancies Reform Act of 1998, 5 U.S.C. 3345 *et seq.* (Vacancies Act), during any period in which the Secretary has died, resigned, or otherwise become unable to perform the functions and duties of the office of Secretary.

"(a) Order of Succession.

- (i) Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security;
- (ii) Under Secretary for National Protection and Programs;
- (iii) Under Secretary for Management;
- (iv) Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Policy);
- (v) Under Secretary for Science and Technology;
- (vi) General Counsel;
- (vii) Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration);
- (viii) Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency;
- (ix) Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection;
- (x) Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement);